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2011 News Releases

U.S. EPA Proposes to Add LA County Industrial Facilities to List of Nation's Worst Toxic Sites / Seam Master Industries and Jervis B. Webb Co. – both in South Gate

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SAN FRANCISCO – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is proposing to add two new sites to the Superfund National Priorities List in Los Angeles County, Calif. The Seam Master Industries site and the Jervis B. Webb Co. site are both located in South Gate, Calif. Volatile organic compounds, including elevated levels of trichloroethylene (TCE), commonly used as a solvent for cleaning metal parts, have been confirmed in the soils and groundwater at these sites.

Superfund is the federal program that investigates and cleans up the most complex, uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites in the country. Listing these sites on the NPL means that EPA can investigate and clean up the sites using federal funding.


“These industrial plants are located in I-710 corridor, an area that is a high priority for EPA,” said Jared Blumenfeld, EPA’s Regional Administrator for the Pacific Southwest. “We are proposing to add the sites to the NPL so we can proceed with investigating and cleaning them, while holding the polluters financially responsible.”


South Gate is one of several densely populated communities closest to the I-710 freeway, where the effects of pollution are disproportionately higher than in other areas of Los Angeles County. Approximately 1 million people, about 70% of whom are minority and low-income households, are severely impacted by pollution from industrial activities in the area and goods movement along the nearby freeway.


From 1972 through to the present day, the Seam Master Industries site has been occupied by a facility that manufactures hot-melt adhesive tape for laying carpets. Prior to 1972, Pacific Screw Products Corporation manufactured screw products at the property until the business went bankrupt.

The Jervis B. Webb Co. conducted metal fabrication, finishing, painting and assembly operations associated with the manufacture of industrial conveyor belt systems from the 1950s to 1996 on a portion of the Jervis B. Webb Co. site. In 1997, Reliable Steel, Inc. purchased this portion of the site. Blake Rivet Company leased another portion of the site until approximately 1981. The Blake Rivet Company produced aluminum and stainless steel aircraft rivets.

TCE contamination in the groundwater at both of these sites is present above the drinking water Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL). The MCL is the highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. Although the drinking water supply wells

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immediately down gradient of the two sites are located in a deeper aquifer and are not currently contaminated, because the aquifers are connected, there is the potential that drinking water wells may become contaminated.

EPA also announced that it is adding to the NPL two abandoned mine sites that discharge toxic pollutants to Northern California's waterways. The New Idria Mercury Mine site in San Benito County affects streams leading to the San Joaquin River and San Francisco Bay. Blue Ledge Mine in Siskiyou County discharges into streams in the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest and ultimately the Applegate Reservoir, a popular recreation area. These sites were proposed to the National Priorities List in March 2011.

To date, there have been 1,652 sites listed on the NPL since 1980, 107 of which are in California. Nationally, construction has been completed at two-thirds of these sites.

With all Superfund sites, EPA tries to identify and locate the parties potentially responsible for the contamination. For the newly listed sites without viable potentially responsible parties, EPA will investigate the full extent of the contamination before starting significant cleanup at the site.

For the Federal Register notice and supporting documents, please visit: <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/npl/current.htm>

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